APPEAL TO THE ELECTORS.

Mr. Gladstone or Lord Salisbury: Which?

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The choice of the electors in the coming general election is solely between Mr. Gladstone's policy of remedy for Irish grievances, and Lord Salisbury's traditional Tory policy of English Rule in Ireland maintained by force. In deciding how he shall vote at the election the voter may pass by Lord Hartington, for he is, in this case, only arrayed as the temporary supporter of Lord Salisbury's policy. The voter may ignore Mr. Chamberlain, for he, too, though in favor of some large remedy for Irish misgovernment, has for the moment given in the lobby the strength of himself and his friends to swell against Mr. Gladstone the ranks of Lord Salisbury's followers. Tories know this well enough, for they openly declare that they intend to vote for the so-called Unionist Liberals who have figured in the division list against the principle of local self-government for Ireland. The choice for the nation to-day is only between Mr. Gladstone and the Tories. Mr. Chamberlain in his manifesto says that the Government came into office on the amendment of Mr. Jesse Collings in favor of allotments and small holdings, and complains that, neglecting the English agricultural laborers, Mr. Gladstone has made novel and

unexpected propositions on behalf of Ireland. This complaint is not a just one. The amendment of Mr. Jesse Collings was carried immediately after the declaration by the Tories, made in both Houses of Parliament, of their intention to renew a coercion policy in Ireland. Nearly every Conservative speaker in the House of Commons on January 26th urged that the division which was then about to take place was really on the issue raised as to Ireland. The amendment of Mr. Jesse Collings, vigorously opposed by Lord Hartington, Mr. Goschen and their friends, was only carried by the aid of the Irish vote. That vote was certainly given to drive the Tories from office because of their coercion declaration. Many of the Whigs and so-called Unionists who now vote against Home Rule then refused to vote for the agricultural laborer, and some of the Whigs, who now ask for the agricultural laborer's vote, voted directly against him on January 26th. If there has been neglect, Mr. Chamberlain must share the blame, for, when accepting the Presidency of the Local Government Board, he could have stipulated for pressing the measures, to which he regarded the Government as pledged, in the interval prior to April 8th when the Irish Bill was introduced.

If Mr. Gladstone's Irish Government Bill was novel it most certainly ought not to have been unexpected; Mr. Chamberlain when joining Mr. Gladstone's Government knew that some legislative proposal would without delay have to be made by the Prime Minister. The Tories had on January 26th declared the state of Ireland to be so serious that immediate repressive legislation was necessary. The Tory Government in Ireland had collapsed, and so thoroughly collapsed that Ireland for the first time in

modern recollection was without even a Viceroy. Lord Carnarvon had resigned and had not been replaced. Sir W. Hart Dyke had resigned also his office as Chief Secretary, and his successor had not been found. Mr. W. H. Smith had gone to Ireland to enquire, but the result of his researches has never been made known. Mr. Gladstone had no choice on this Irish question; he could not pass it over, or avoid it; he was compelled to attempt to deal with it. His merit is that he has tried cure instead of repression. If the Tories were right in their official declarations on January 26th, the situation they had created, or which had developed, in Ireland, during the government of Lord Carnarvon was so grave that it would have been treason on the part of Mr. Gladstone to neglect it.

How ought Ireland to be dealt with? Mr. Gladstone says that Ireland should, by a domestic legislature and native executive, govern itself in all things which do not touch the supremacy of the Parliament at Westminster, and which do not impair the unity of the Empire. What does Lord Salisbury say? That he offers "no opposition to local government being extended to Ireland", but this he clearly did not mean, for a little later in the same speech he declared: "I would never advise my countrymen to place confidence in the inhabitants of Ireland . . . . because they are a deeply divided people." Lord Salisbury says that he would have the Government of England govern Ireland honestly, consistently, and resolutely for twenty years; but Lord Salisbury had tried his plan of government, and even if he had been honest he certainly had not been consistent or resolute for so much as even twenty weeks. It was only in September that one of Lord Salisbury's colleagues in the Cabinet said

that after the most careful and sustained attention he had not detected

"any signs of anything which is likely to occur which tends in any way to show that the decision of her Majesty's Government to rely upon the ordinary law for the government of Ireland was in any way an unwise or an unsound decision".

But immediately after the result of the general election was known there was hesitation in the decision, and in January the policy of conciliation was completely abandoned. Experience teaches us that in choosing between Mr. Gladstone and Lord Salisbury it is useless looking to the Tory party for either consistency or resoluteness.

In 1884 the House of Lords, in which Lord Salisbury is paramount, endorsed what the House of Commons had, after opposition from Tory leaders, voted, and granted to the majority of the Irish people the right to choose their own representatives in Parliament. Now Lord Salisbury says: "Government by the majority works admirably well when it is confided to people of the Teutonic race, but it does not work so well when people of other races are called upon to join in it." If this means anything it means the perpetual denial to Ireland of the political right freely accorded in this country. In arranging in 1885 the redistribution of political representation, Lord Salisbury concurred with Mr. Gladstone in keeping the number of Irish representatives relatively to population in excess of the representation accorded to the rest of the United Kingdom. Early in November, 1885, Lord Salisbury and his friends, then trusting to be supported by the Irish vote, helped to circulate Mr. Parnell's manifesto, which called on the Irish in England, Wales, and Scotland to vote for Tories and against Mr. Gladstone and his friends. Last autumn

Lord Carnarvon, the official representative of Lord Salisbury in Ireland, was willing to talk with, and did talk with, Mr. Parnell on the subject of Home Rule in Ireland. Though there is disagreement as to how much was said, it is clear that there was at least informal negotiation. It would be interesting if the revelations as to Lord Carnarvon were supplemented by further revelations as to the formal or informal proposals or suggestions made by Lord Randolph Churchill between the spring of 1885 and the date of the general election. It was only when the friends of Lord Salisbury found themselves at the close of the general election little more than one third of the new House of Commons, that they provoked a Ministerial crisis by proposing coercion in Ireland. To use Mr. Gladstone's own words: "The Irish question was thus placed in the foreground to the exclusion of every other." The new Prime Minister, thus compelled to deal with the question, adopted an anti-coercion policy. Mr. Chamberlain says: "I cannot admit that the due enforcement of just laws can be properly described as coercion". But it is just to describe as coercion such exceptional legislation as is intended to maintain purely English government in Ireland, especially when Mr. Chamberlain himself denounces that government as unjust. It is coercion when exceptional force backs the vicious centralisation of Dublin Castle. Even Lord Randolph Churchill, whose vote was against Mr. Gladstone on June 8th, in the same division list with that of Mr. Chamberlain, is able to tell his present ally against Mr. Gladstone what coercion really means.

"It means," said the noble lord, "that hundreds of Irishmen who, if law had been maintained unaltered, and had been

firmly enforced, would now have been leading peaceful, industrious, and honest lives, will soon be torn off to prison without trial, and others will have to fly the country into hopeless exile; that others, driven to desperation through such cruel alternatives, will perhaps shed their blood, and sacrifice their lives in vain resistance to the forces of the Crown; that many Irish homes, which would have been happy if the evil course had been checked at the outset, will soon be bereaved of their most promising ornament and support, disgraced by a convict's garb and by a felon's cell.

The question for the electors to decide at the polls is thus stated fairly enough by Mr. Gladstone: "Will you govern Ireland by coercion, or will you let her manage her own affairs?" Lord Salisbury, who is now ashamed of the unvarnished description of his own alternative, says: For twenty years we will not let Ireland manage her own affairs; for twenty years we will so resolutely rule Ireland that, though we deny that such rule will be coercion, we in express words admit that at the end of that twenty years there may be need for the "repeal of coercion laws". But I ask English voters, can you govern Ireland for twenty years with coercion laws? and if you can, ought you so to govern her? For eighty-six years, during at least five-sixths of that period, you have tried coercion, and for most of that time Ireland was practically powerless in the Parliament at Westminster. Now, with the state of English political parties, no English statesman can feel quite sure of retaining power with a band of eighty-six resolute men in face of him to turn the scale on each earnestly-contested division. Mr. G. O. Trevelyan does not like entrusting power to the Parnellite party, and I at any rate have had no reason to personally like them; but they are Ireland's representatives, by her

freely chosen, and they are entitled to be heard. It is urged that they have power for mischief; but I reply that we have hitherto prevented them from having power for good. Let them have the duties and responsibilities of government. Sir C. Gavan Duffy was an Irish rebel; he has grown since into a Victorian administrator. Nor ought the Parnellite members to be judged by every rashly-spoken word they have uttered, or even by every criminal deed they have passed uncondemned. Our injustices have often been mothers of the agrarian crimes which have disfigured Ireland. Our paltry, selfish harshness has often been nurse and inciter to their rash speech and conduct. The past of England in Ireland will leave legacy enough of difficulty for statesmen who really desire peace and progress, without the constant revival of every unmeasured and intemperate word or wicked phrase spoken in heat or in bitterness, or in despair, or in the excitement of strife against oppressive authority.

Those who support a proposal for a subordinate legislature in Ireland, with exclusive powers, are now called Separatists; but such subordinate legislatures with such exclusive powers have for some twenty years existed in the Dominion of Canada, and separation has not followed. Yet surely Canada is more amenable to attraction from the United States than Ireland could possibly be from any foreign power. It is said that the Parnellites have advocated separation, and that is probably true; but if it be true, it is also true that when they so advocated separation we refused to consider any measure of Home Rule as within the region of practical politics. Now they declare themselves willing to accept the subordinate legislature offered, and all those in Ireland for whom they speak en-

dorse this solemn declaration. Those who are opposing Mr. Gladstone, and are now presenting themselves as candidates, call themselves Unionists; but we, at present, hold Ireland rather as if we were her jailers than as if we were united with her. Union maintained by heavy garrisons and a constabulary which is an assistant army, is not real union. There is no willing union between a prisoner and his cell, between a prisoner and his handcuffs. Union should imply co-operation, not dominance; Union should mean equality, not subjection. The Paper Union of 1800 has never been real; for nearly thirty years the great majority of the Irish people were subject to disabilities, and liable to penal laws which have been described by Lord Coleridge as "unparalleled in the history of the world". Union! it was the union of the chained and muzzled dog with his owner or keeper. Until 1844 some of these penal laws continued to disfigure our statute book. Union! how could there be union when until 1869 the church of the minority had State power, State wealth, and State privilege, whilst that of the majority had none? Union! how could there be union whilst the healthy reformed municipal life encouraged in England for more than fifty years, has yet to be created on the same broad lines in Ireland? Union! how could there be union in Ireland when until 1884 there was no such wide political franchise as was enjoyed by the people of this country? Union! how is union possible when Ireland is treated as a piece of machinery to be wound up from Dublin Castle?

In a Radical programme issued in 1885, and commended by Mr. Chamberlain to his fellow Radicals the actual government of Ireland is thus described:

"If the object of government were to paralyse local effort,

to annihilate local responsibility, and daily to give emphasis to the fact that the whole country is under the domination of an alien race, no system could be devised more likely to secure its object than that now in force in Ireland. We hold that the continuance of such a system is unjust to Ireland, useless to England, and dangerous to both. It has irritated Ireland almost beyond endurance, and it has resulted in preventing the Imperial Parliament from giving its attention to many reforms of which England stands in need."

Surely those have no claim to be called Unionists who try to perpetuate a state of things so dangerous and unjust. Real union is only possible between free and equal peoples; where one has the right of self-government and the other is denied this, there may be conquest and subjection, there is no union. There is the bond which power forges, which holds as a chain; but there is no voluntary uniting bond of sympathy or fraternity. The paper union is the indenture of forced servitude, not the freely-executed partnership deed. I ask voters to test, bend, and break this counterfeit self-styled Unionist coin, even though it is now to be manufactured for the Primrose League by a Birmingham firm. It has been in enforced circulation eighty-six years, and has only purchased three-quarters of a century of discontent, disaffection, and conspiracy.

The choice at the ballot-box is only between a Government to be headed by Lord Salisbury and one to be headed by William Ewart Gladstone. The new democracy cannot vote for Lord Salisbury. Whilst his party held office they kept back the suffrage to which to-day they appeal. Whilst his party held office they hindered the redistribution of political power which has since more nearly proportioned parliament and the people. If you want to know how to cast your ballot, voter, look where Mr. Goschen stands by

the side of Lord Salisbury. Consistently Mr. Goschen opposed the grant of the suffrage to you, as he now opposes the grant of self-government to Ireland. Consistently he opposed the proportioning representation to population, because he is not of and has little sympathy with the people. If Mr. Goschen stands to-day with Mr. Chamberlain in his anxiety for "immediate legislation for the benefit of the agricultural laborer", he did not so stand with him at the end of January. If you are in doubt how you should vote, remember that for more than a quarter of a century Mr. Gladstone has been constantly associated with measures of popular enfranchisement. Do not be beguiled or misled by appeals to religious prejudice or attempts at revival of no popery cries. Vote for justice to Ireland, it is your duty; for generous treatment of Irishmen, too long unfairly governed in your name, though not by your consent, this is now your obligation; and vote for Mr. Gladstone, in the hope that whilst force has miserably failed to solve this Irish problem, fair treatment and honest generous resolve may succeed.